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GROUP 1
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~~SECRET~~

CITE [REDACTED]

. 200122 Z

DIST 19 MARCH 1968

COUNTRY: GUATEMALA

DOI: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: REPORTED PRESSURE TO FORCE THE RESIGNATION OF
PRESIDENT JULIO CESAR MENDEZ MONTENEGRO

90

EO 12958
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

ACQ: [REDACTED]

EO 12958
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

SOURCE: [REDACTED]
MYYH [REDACTED]

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

1. DURING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISERS AND LEADERS OF THE
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PR, GOVERNMENT PARTY) IN LATE AFTERNOON OF
[REDACTED] PRESIDENT JULIO CESAR MENDEZ MONTENEGRO REVEALED
THAT HE HAD RECEIVED A COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE ABDUCTION OF
MARIO CASARIEGO, ARCHBISHOP OF GUATEMALA. MENDEZ SAID THE COMMUNICATION

~~S-E-C-R-E-T NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: SEP 2001

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(classification) (dissem controls)

WAS IN THE FORM OF A TYPEWRITTEN NOTE, WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT IN AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO HIM AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE EARLIER THAT AFTERNOON BY AN UNIDENTIFIED PERSON OR PERSONS. THE NOTE, WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE PHOTOCOPIES OF TWO LETTERS FROM CASARIEGO REQUESTING CERTAIN SUPPLIES AND MEDICINES, READ AS FOLLOWS: "ATTACHED ARE THE PHOTOCOPIES OF TWO LETTERS FROM MONSEÑOR CASARIEGO. THE ORIGINALS ARE BEING RETAINED FOR HISTORY. WE HAVE MONSEÑOR CASARIEGO, AND IF YOU DO NOT RESIGN AS PRESIDENT WITHIN 24 HOURS, YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CASARIEGO'S LIFE. THE 24-HOUR PERIOD BEGINS AS OF NOON ON 18 MARCH 1968".

2. MENDEZ TOLD HIS ADVISERS AND THE PR LEADERS PRESENT THAT HE HAD JUST HELD SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH LEADING MILITARY OFFICIALS AND WITH OFFICIALS OF THE CURIA OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN GUATEMALA. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE TOLD BOTH GROUPS THAT HIS PERSONAL OPINION WAS THAT HE SHOULD NOT RESIGN, BUT THAT HE WISHED TO SOLICIT THE VIEWPOINTS OF THE MILITARY AND THE CHURCH BEFORE REACHING A FINAL DECISION. BOTH THE MILITARY AND THE CHURCH OFFICIALS AGREED THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD NOT RESIGN.

~~SECRET~~ NO FOREIGN DISSEM



~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~ ~~NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~
(classification) (dissem controls)

3. [REDACTED] COMMENT: GOVERNMENT AND PR OFFICIALS SPECULATE THAT RIGHTIST POLITICIANS ARE BEHIND THE ABDUCTION, AND THAT THE OBJECTIVE IS TO FORCE THE REPLACEMENT OF MENDEZ BY VICE PRESIDENT CLEMENTE MARROQUIN ROJAS. PHOTOCOPIES OF THE TWO LETTERS, WHICH WERE ADDRESSED TO MONSEÑOR JOSE RAMIRO PELLEGER SAMAYOA AND TO THE PAPAL NUNCIO IN GUATEMALA, WERE ALSO LEFT AT THE OFFICES OF ALL NEWSPAPERS IN GUATEMALA CITY DURING THE AFTERNOON OF 18 MARCH. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LA HORA, AFTERNOON DAILY, WHICH PRINTED THE TEXT OF THE LETTERS, ALL NEWSPAPERS CONTACTED GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES TO REPORT THE RECEIPT OF THE LETTERS. MARROQUIN, OWNER OF LA HORA, DID NOT TELL THE PRESIDENT HIS PAPER HAD RECEIVED THE PHOTOCOPIES).

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COMMENT; IN HIS LETTERS, CASARIEGO REQUESTED MEDICINES AND PERSONAL SUPPLIES. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE REQUIRED ITEMS COULD BE PASSED TO CASARIEGO).

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4. [REDACTED] COMMENT: DURING THE AFTERNOON OF 19 MARCH PRESIDENT MENDEZ REQUESTED THE IMMEDIATE RETURN OF DEFENSE MINISTER RAFAEL ARRIAGA BOSQUE, WHO IS ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES).

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5. [REDACTED] DISSEM: STATE, ARMY, AIR, CINCSO. ADVANCE COPIES SENT ELECTRICALLY TO USIB MEMBERS AND EXO